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ABSTRACT

This case study examines the impact Quest made at Xavier Senior High School, a large secondary public school located in a northern Virginia suburb. Approximately 62 percent of the student body are identified as white, while the remainder are African-American (20 percent), Hispanic (10 percent), and Asian/Pacific Islander (5 percent). A variety of data-collection methods and instruments were used in this case study. Systematic participant observation was conducted at nearly every Quest event, as well as semistructured interviews and the solicitation of formative feedback from project participants. In addition, a semistructured focus-group interview was conducted with approximately 10 members of the school faculty who had been minimally or not all involved in Quest events (appendix C). Finally, nine Quest team members completed the Reflective Assessment questionnaire (appendix D). Interviews and means on the Innovation Configuration Checklist revealed that Xavier had been highly involved in Quest, from attending network events regularly to implementing two school-improvement processes during the project. However, the focus-group interview with faculty not directly involved in Quest revealed that many interviewees did not think the project had permeated the school. Some gains on the Standards of Learning test were made between 1998 and 1999, particularly on the math tests. Nevertheless, the percent of students passing most tests continued to fall below the state standard of 70 percent. Other appendixes list brochures, interview protocols, and checklists. (Contains 42 references.) (DFR)

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XAVIER SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF THE QUEST NETWORK

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XAVIER SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL:
A CASE STUDY OF THE QUEST NETWORK

Caitlin Howley-Rowe
July 2000

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY iii

INTRODUCTION 1

AEL's Quest Project 1
Quest Activities 1
Summative Evaluation of Quest 3

METHODS 5

XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL 8

Context 8

FINDINGS 11

Innovation Configuration Checklist Findings 11
Reflective Assessment Findings 12
Professional Learning Community Findings 15
Student Achievement 16
Focus Group and Individual Interview Findings 18
Personal Impact 18
School Impact 20
General Impact of Quest at Xavier 20
Impact of Data in a Day at Xavier 23
Impact of Protocol at Xavier 24
Value of the Quest Network 24

CONCLUSIONS 27

REFERENCES 29

APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Quest Brochure and Framework of Continuous Improvement
Appendix B: Quest Team Member Individual Interview Protocol
Appendix C: Faculty Focus Group Protocol
Appendix D: Quest Reflective Assessment Instrument
Appendix E: Professional Learning Community Instrument
Appendix F: Quest Innovation Configuration Checklist
Appendix G: Completed Evaluation *Standards* Checklist

TABLES

1: Summative Evaluation Questions and Instruments/Methods 4

2: Innovation Configuration Checklist Descriptive Statistics 11

3: Reflective Assessment Mean Ratings 13

4: Results of the Professional Learning Community Instrument 16

5: Percent Passing SOL Tests, 1998-1999 17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) contract to develop a framework for continuous school improvement in its four-state region, AEL, Inc. staff designed the Quest project (see Appendix A). Based upon principles of inquiry, collaboration, and action research, Quest proposes to support and investigate ongoing school improvement efforts through twice-yearly conferences (which staff renamed rallies), summer symposia, a Scholars program, visits to participating schools, communication via listserv and mailings, and the creation of a Quest network of schools. The project began with rallies for elementary and high schools in October and November 1997 and has continued until the time of this writing. Membership in the Quest network has ranged from 20 schools to the current 17.

Formative evaluation revealed the high level of satisfaction participants had with Quest and the great extent to which the project met its goals at each event (Howley-Rowe, 1999a-c, 1998a-f). Exploratory research also indicated various reasons some schools were more involved in the network than others (Howley-Rowe, 1999d). These sources of information convinced project staff that Quest had made some impact on those involved. Quest staff were therefore more interested in summative evaluation that elucidated *in what ways* Quest had been of value to schools and individuals in the project than in evaluation focusing solely on quantitative outcome measures.

A case study approach was taken for summative evaluation of the Quest project. Given that Quest staff were most interested in understanding the impact of the project on various levels, from the individual to the school to the network, the case study method seemed most appropriate. In addition, project staff were committed to understanding project impact from the perspectives of various participants in the network, including students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

This case study examines the impact Quest made at Xavier Senior High School, a large secondary public school located in a northern Virginia suburb. Built in 1974 to accommodate around 2,700 students, the school now serves grades 9 through 12 and approximately 3,000 students. Xavier is staffed by 7 administrators, 201 teachers, 8 teaching assistants, and 55 classified staff. A diverse student population attends Xavier. Approximately 62% of the student body is identified as white, non-Hispanic. African-American (20%), Hispanic (10%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (5%) students are also represented.

A variety of data collection methods and instruments were used in this case study. Systematic participant observation was conducted at nearly every Quest event, as well as semi-structured interviews and the solicitation of formative feedback from project participants. Pre- and post-test scores on the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* (see Appendix F) were to be analyzed to discern if case study schools had become more like professional learning communities over the course of their participation in Quest. However, only pre-test data were available for Xavier. The evaluator and a trained Quest consultant conducted a site visit on April 3-4, 2000, to Xavier, during which semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with nine Quest team members using a predesigned protocol (see Appendix B). In addition, a semi-structured focus group interview

was conducted with approximately 10 members of the school faculty who had been minimally or not at all involved in Quest events (see Appendix C). Finally, nine Quest team members completed the Reflective Assessment questionnaire (see Appendix D).

Other data sources included summary achievement data from the state-mandated Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. Another instrument completed by Quest participants at the close of the project was an Innovation Configuration Checklist detailing the essential components of Quest as well as variations thereof (see Appendix E).

Interviews and means on the Innovation Configuration Checklist revealed that Xavier had been highly involved in Quest, from attending network events regularly to implementing two school improvement processes learned during the project. Faculty reported that their use of the Protocol process, a technique for teachers to examine student work in a non-threatening atmosphere, had enhanced teacher collaboration and reduced teacher isolation. The survey assessing the degree to which staff viewed themselves as a professional learning community indicated that Xavier faculty believed they constituted a learning community after approximately two years in the network, the point at which the pre-test was administered to school staff.

However, the focus group interview with faculty not directly involved in Quest revealed that many interviewees did not think the project had permeated the school. Although several respondents were aware of the processes implemented as a result of Quest, many were unaware of their origin. One reason for this may be the school's large size and the many competing initiatives and concerns to which faculty and administrators must attend.

In terms of student achievement, some gains on the SOL tests were made between 1998 and 1999, particularly on the math tests. Nonetheless, the percent of students passing most tests continued to fall below the state standard of 70%.

It was concluded Quest had been highly valuable personally and professionally to those who had been most closely associated with the network. Student achievement improved somewhat in 1999, although the percent of students passing most SOL tests continued to fall short of the state standard. The two processes implemented at Xavier were viewed positively by those involved, but other staff were relatively unaware of Quest. One of the processes continues to be implemented at the school and may be used in more departments. Despite the loss of two school administrators who had been highly involved in the project, it is possible that Quest related initiatives may continue with the patronage of individual Quest network members.

INTRODUCTION

AEL's Quest Project

As part of its contract to develop a framework for continuous school improvement in its four-state region, AEL staff designed the Quest project (see Appendix A). Based upon principles of inquiry, collaboration, and action research, Quest proposes to support and investigate ongoing school improvement efforts through twice-yearly conferences (which staff renamed rallies), summer symposia, a Scholars program, visits to participating schools, communication via listserv and mailings, and the creation of a Quest network of schools.

The project draws from literature on school change suggesting that subjectivity and personal growth are essential to the change process (Fullan, 1991). Yet because individual development takes place within a variety of social contexts, including school communities, staff designed the Quest network with attention to the ways shared vision, goals, and sense of community support ongoing school improvement (Barth, 1990; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Postman, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1994). Similarly, school culture may impede or enhance significantly the viability of school improvement work (Richardson, 1996; Ryan, 1995). If a school community shares certain norms, such as self-evaluation, curiosity, proactivity, and high performance expectations, reform efforts are hypothesized to fare better than those in school cultures that do not possess such norms. Other research suggests that school administrators must assume a collaborative role in decision-making if reform efforts are to succeed (van der Bogert, 1998), and that instructional and curricular goals must be informed by a diverse contingent of school stakeholders, including parents, students, and community members (Barth, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994).

Quest staff were also attuned to literature suggesting that honoring the purpose of education enhances school change. Assessment strategies, for instance, ought to serve multiple ends, not the least of which is to provide information for ongoing teaching and learning (Wiggins, 1993). And ultimately, education generally and reform endeavors specifically need to nurture a host of attributes enabling students to make use of their education to lead thoughtful lives (Perkins, 1995; Postman, 1995).

In sum, Quest staff sought to create a network of schools committed to continuous improvement, collaboration, and inquiry. Participants would engage in, reflect upon, and assess the reform endeavors their schools undertook with the support of Quest.

Quest Activities

In the summer of 1996, Quest staff at AEL began working with teams from school communities in three West Virginia county school districts to invigorate efforts for continuous school improvement, using a variety of techniques for gathering input from all those with a stake in their local schools (Howley-Rowe, 1998g). This first learning community, called Leadership to Unify School Improvement Efforts (LUSIE), consisted of school teams including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Ultimately, this group wrote individual school visions and improvement plans, and co-authored (with AEL) *Creating Energy for School*

Improvement (1997), a supplemental guide for those poised to write their own state-mandated school improvement plans.

Quest staff also were committed to creating learning communities devoted to exploring continuous school improvement across the AEL region of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Hence, staff scheduled a pilot Inquiry Into Improvement conference in April 1997 for selected region high schools. Schools were selected in several ways. Some schools were recommended for the Quest experience by central office staff or school administrators. Other schools were asked to join Quest because they had participated in previous AEL programs. Still other schools were invited because Quest staff believed they were primed for the kind of collaborative inquiries into school improvement that Quest was designed to provide.

In October 1997, in Roanoke, Virginia, another conference was held for designated high schools in the AEL region, this time with an explicit emphasis on forming and nurturing a network of schools (Howley-Rowe, 1998c). A similar conference was held in Nashville, Tennessee, for designated region elementary schools in November 1997 (Howley-Rowe, 1998a). In order to facilitate the development of a Quest school network and to continue to help invigorate continuous school improvement efforts within network schools, staff planned a sequence of events in 1998 following these initial conferences. Dissatisfied with the conventional and prescriptive connotation of the word conference, Quest staff chose to call these network meetings rallies. Thus, all events previously called conferences are now termed rallies.

The high school network met a second time on February 8-10, 1998, at the Pipestem State Park Resort in West Virginia (Howley-Rowe, 1998d), following which the elementary school network participated in a rally on February 22-24, 1998, in Lexington, Kentucky (Howley-Rowe, 1998b). During the summer, 11 network members participated in the Quest Scholars Program, meeting at a colloquium in Charleston, West Virginia, on July 16-18, 1998, to collaborate with project staff in ongoing efforts to conceptualize, design, and research Quest (Howley-Rowe, 1998e). Finally, in August, network members and other educators in AEL's region participated in a symposium on assessment of student work (Howley-Rowe, 1998f).

From the high school network rally in October 1997 to the August 1998 summer symposium, Quest staff hosted six network events. The Quest network contained an essentially stable membership, although there were differences in the number of school teams that attended each event and in the frequency that school teams attended gatherings. Project staff recently investigated this phenomenon, finding that administrative support for participation in the network was the factor reported to be most important to schools' initial and sustained involvement in Quest (Howley-Rowe, 1999c).

Beginning their second year of network activity, Quest staff invited the elementary and high school networks to attend a rally together on November 2-3, 1998, at the Glade Springs Resort, near Daniels, West Virginia (Howley-Rowe, 1999a). Approximately half of the Quest Scholars met on November 1, 1998, to plan with project staff several rally activities. Scholars from the high school

network met for three hours on February 14, 1999, prior to a high school network rally held on February 15-16 in Roanoke, Virginia (Howley-Rowe, 1999c). A similar rally was held for elementary network members on February 22-23, 1999, in Lexington, Kentucky (Howley-Rowe, 1999b).

A second Scholars colloquium was convened from July 12-15, 1999, at Mountain Lake Resort, Virginia. The primary purpose of this colloquium was for Quest staff and Scholars to collaborate in evaluating and writing about the project, ultimately contributing written pieces to a book about the Quest network. In addition, a second summer symposium was convened in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, July 26-27, 1999 (Parrish & Howley-Rowe, 2000).

The third year of Quest events began with two rallies and a Scholars meeting in November 1999 in Bristol, Virginia. A rally for elementary schools was conducted from November 11-12, 1999. Scholars met to discuss writing and several Quest instruments November 13-14. And a high school rally was held November 15-16. Evaluation of these events was not conducted as staff turned their efforts to summative evaluation of the project; Quest and the 1996-2000 REL contract funding the project would come to an end in November 2000.

Summative Evaluation of Quest

Quest staff delineated several evaluation questions they hoped summative evaluation would address. These questions were categorized in terms of inputs and outcomes, or independent and dependent variables. In other words, staff wanted to understand the relationship of such issues as extent of involvement in Quest and school-specific improvement efforts inspired by Quest to issues such as the extent to which professional learning community was enhanced or to which participating schools approximated the Quest framework of continuous improvement. More succinctly, Quest staff hoped to learn from summative evaluation what impact participation in Quest had upon schools, individuals within them, and upon the network as a whole.

Summative evaluation questions and the instruments or methods used to answer them are listed in Table 1.

Thus, summative evaluation of Quest is intended to answer the questions delineated above formulated by Quest staff and the evaluator. Summative evaluation will describe the impact Quest had on schools and their school communities, providing some evidence of the effectiveness of the project.

The primary audience for summative evaluation of the project is Quest staff at AEL. It is intended to offer project staff a summative perspective on the impact of Quest in four disparate schools. Other audiences include representatives of AEL's funding source, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), and policymakers, school administrators, teachers, education researchers, and others interested in strategies to support continuous school improvement.

Table 1
Summative Evaluation Questions and Instruments/Methods

Independent variables/inputs	**Instruments/Methods**
To what extent do Quest team members think their schools have enacted Quest components?	Innovation Configuration Checklist
What specific Quest related activities have schools participated in?	History of involvement
Dependent variables/outcomes	**Instruments/Methods**
Has Quest enhanced professional learning community in network schools?	*School Staff as Professional Learning Community* instrument pre- and post-test
To what extent do members of the Quest team think their school approximates the Quest framework, and to what degree is this attributable to Quest?	Reflective Assessment instrument
What have been the changes in student achievement during Quest participation?	Achievement data School report card
What has been the impact of Quest on individuals, schools, and of what value has the network been?	Quest team member interviews
What have schools undertaken as a result of Quest, and what have been the results?	Faculty focus group Quest team member interviews
What have been the results of school projects undertaken due to Quest?	School data about results of school projects
What do network participants report has happened at their schools due to Quest? In what other ways has Quest been effective?	School stories

METHODS

A case study approach was taken for summative evaluation of the Quest project. Given that Quest staff were most interested in understanding the impact of the project on various levels, from the individual to the school to the network, the case study method seemed appropriate. In addition, project staff were committed to understanding project impact from the perspectives of various participants in the network, including students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Case studies involve in-depth "multi-perspectival analyses" (Tellis, 1997) of single systems or phenomena; they rely on clearly delineated boundaries rather than on sampling (Stake, 1995). The focus, depth, and ability to account for multiple viewpoints associated with the case study approach led Quest staff to consider using such a method.

Moreover, formative evaluation had revealed the high level of satisfaction participants had with Quest and the great extent to which the project met its goals at each event (Howley-Rowe, 1999a-c, 1998a-f). Exploratory research also indicated various reasons some schools were more involved in the network than others (Howley-Rowe, 1999d). These sources of information convinced project staff that Quest had made some impact on those involved. Quest staff were therefore more interested in summative evaluation that elucidated *in what ways* Quest had been of value to schools and individuals in the project.

Hence, summative evaluation of the Quest project includes case studies of four network schools. The schools were selected based on their high level of involvement in Quest, for their varied interpretations and uses of the project, and their diverse locations and demographic constitutions.

For example, while one school used Quest to support parent involvement programs, another discovered a variety of inquiry techniques to improve student writing. One small elementary school is located in a rural, impoverished Appalachian area, while a very large high school is in a relatively wealthy suburb of the nation's capital. All four schools, nonetheless, found Quest flexible enough to accommodate their very different goals for improvement and structured enough to provide constructive strategies supporting change.

A strength of case studies is their reliance on triangulation of data to provide a more comprehensive description of the objects of study than might be rendered by use of a research method that does not involve triangulation of data. Using several data sources to corroborate theses is what Brewer and Hunter (1989) call "multimethod research." This approach posits that the strengths of each method will compensate for the weaknesses in others, ultimately providing a more complete account of that being studied.

On the other hand, the case study approach has been criticized for its "dependence on a single case [which] renders it incapable of providing a generalizing conclusion" (Tellis, 1997, p. 3). While generalization to populations is certainly compromised by the case study method, generalization to theory is not as problematic if case studies are conducted with sufficient rigor and transparency. Hence, conclusions generated by case studies can be used to generalize by synecdoche as "a claim

that the essential features of the larger social unit are reproduced in microcosm within the smaller social unit, and that by studying them in micro we might make inferences about the macrostructure of which they are a part" (Brewer &Hunter, 1989, p. 123).

Both qualitative and quantitative methods contributed to this evaluation component of the Quest project. During project events, the evaluator engaged in participant observation (Becker & Geer, 1957; Emerson, 1983; Glazer, 1972; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Miles & Huberman, 1994), a method highly suited "for studying processes, relationships among people and events, the organization of people and events, continuities over time, and patterns" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 12). Furthermore, consistent with the Quest paradigm, participant observation involves "a flexible, open-ended, opportunistic process and logic of inquiry through which what is studied constantly is subject to redefinition based on field experience and observation" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 23). This method "is a commitment to adopt the perspective of those studied by sharing in their . . . experiences" (Denzin, 1989, p. 156), thereby enabling researchers to evaluate how an event or process appears and feels to participants. And, finally, participant observation places the evaluator squarely in the field, rather than in the office or on the phone, allowing for the collection of richer, more directly acquired data (Patton, 1980).

Denzin (1989) describes four variations in participant observation strategies: the complete participant, the participant as observer, the observer as participant, and the complete observer (pp. 162-65). The evaluator played a role more akin to the participant as observer, participating in ongoing project activities as appropriate but not concealing data collection.

In order to corroborate the theses generated by participant observation, the evaluator also conducted other data collection and analysis activities.

The evaluator and a trained Quest consultant conducted a data collection site visit April 3-4, 2000, during which semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with nine Xavier Quest team members using a predesigned protocol. In addition, semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with approximately 10 members of the school faculty who had been minimally or not at all involved in Quest events. Finally, Quest team members completed the Reflective Assessment questionnaire.

Pre- and post-test scores on the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* were analyzed to discern if case study schools had become more like professional learning communities over the course of their participation in Quest. This instrument was first administered to all network schools in December 1997, and again in February 2000 as the project drew to a close. The surveys were sent to a contact person at each network school, who distributed the instruments to faculty, then collected and returned completed surveys to Quest staff. Unfortunately, this data collection activity was not completed at Xavier.

Another instrument completed by Quest participants at the close of the project was an Innovation Configuration Checklist detailing the essential components of Quest as well as variations

thereof. All network participants in attendance at the February 2000 rallies were administered the Checklist.

Other data sources included achievement data from the state-mandated standardized test and data gathered during Xavier participation in Quest sponsored events, including a technical assistance visit and project events.

Identical instruments and individual and group interview protocols were used across the four case study sites to allow for comparative analyses, should staff consider such comparisons useful.

XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL

Context

Xavier Senior High School (XSHS) is a pseudonym for a large secondary public school located in a northern Virginia suburb. Built in 1974 to accommodate around 2,700 students, the school now serves grades 9 through 12 and approximately 3,000 students. The facilities include 125 classrooms and 8 trailers, as well as labs for home arts, computers, science, technology, and business and vocational education. In addition, the school includes instructional and performance areas for band, chorus, fine arts, and physical education. Xavier is staffed by 7 administrators, 201 teachers, 8 teaching assistants, and 55 classified staff.

A diverse student population attends Xavier. Approximately 62% of the student body is identified as white, non-Hispanic. African-American (20%), Hispanic (10%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (5%) students are also represented. Because the school serves a community with a military installation, the student mobility rate approaches 19%. Approximately 15% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Seven percent of students participate in special education programs, 3% in English as a Second Language (ESL), 11% in gifted education, and 1% in work study. Sixty percent of the student body is enrolled in vocational education courses. Average daily attendance is approximately 92%, while average class size ranges from 19-25. The 1997-98 school profile reveals a 92% graduation rate based on 12th grade enrollment.

The community surrounding Xavier is relatively affluent, with 1996 estimates of mean household income reaching approximately $55,000 (U.S. Census Bureau). The percent of county residents estimated to be in poverty in 1996 is 5.4. According to 1990 Census statistics, 87.8% of county residents over the age of 25 had graduated from high school; 27.6% had graduated from college.

The county in which Xavier is situated has undergone tremendous growth since 1980, according to the Census Bureau. The overall county population increased 49.1%, jumping from 144,636 in1980 to 254,464 in 1997. The majority (82.8%) of residents are White, but the percentage of African American residents (12.8%) approximates that of the larger U.S. population.

XSHS has participated in AEL's Quest for Quality Learning Communities project since October 1997 (Howley-Rowe, 1998c). XSHS was invited to participate in the project at the recommendation of state department of education staff, and some XSHS Quest team members have been among the most active participants in the network since.

XSHS was invited by Quest staff to participate in a further activity, the School Change Collaborative (SCC), a national partnership coordinated by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). During a meeting of SCC members in Chicago, Illinois, XSHS staff were introduced to a method of school assessment called Data in a Day (DIAD), in which school community members created observation forms, collected observational data, and analyzed and

reported such data to the broader school community. They observed DIAD again in the fall of 1998, this time as adapted by another Quest school, Bowman Elementary, to focus on its particular concerns. Convinced that the process was amenable to alteration, XSHS staff decided to use the process as well with various adaptations to examine the 4x4 block schedule implemented several years earlier.

Xavier conducted DIAD on December 8-9, 1998. Approximately 50 school community members assisted with the data collection and analysis, including parents, students, and teachers. Several representatives from the school district participated as well. Broken into "research teams," the participants observed 48 classrooms, captured data from three focus groups, and analyzed survey data from parents and teachers. Teams then summarized and reported the data to the entire faculty during a staff meeting on December 9.

Follow-up with Xavier's principal in the summer of 1999 revealed that two initiatives based on conclusions from DIAD had continued their trajectory. She reported that the homework committee had met extensively with departments and as a group until the end of the school year, ultimately intending to create recommendations for inclusion in the teacher handbook to guide teachers as they planned homework assignments. Although such recommendations had not yet been crafted, the principal reported that the homework committee had considered creating a schedule of major projects assigned students to reduce redundancy and overwork.

The second initiative concerned converting several courses to an AB block schedule. The principal reported that a group of teachers had met to determine which core content courses would lend themselves to such a schedule. They eventually identified 3-5 pairs of compatible courses, published information about the possibility of placing these on an AB schedule in the school newsletter, and requested that interested parents complete a form indicating that their children might want to participate. Only six responses were received. Consequently, the group sent a form for requests separately from the newsletter, to which they received approximately 90 responses. To run two paired courses on the AB schedule, a minimum of 50 students would need to request them; only one of the proposed pairs, 9th grade English and World History, met this criterion. When those students whose parents had requested their participation in the AB classes were asked for their reaction to the possibility that only one AB pair would be added, the majority reported they had not been interested in taking AB courses in the first place. Rather, their parents had made the requests. Nonetheless, the principal noted that several courses were on an AB schedule already, and that the 9th grade English and World History pair would likely be scheduled similarly.

Xavier undertook another Quest technique during the 1998-99 school year when the school's central office administration mandated that all 11th grade students complete successfully a research paper. To address this new directive, Xavier English department staff elected to use the California Protocol Process, learned of from Quest staff, as a vehicle to examine and discuss students' research papers. Members of the department modeled the process for Quest network members at a rally in February 1999. Their presentation is described here:

"At 10:00 a.m., six members of the Xavier Senior High School team convened in front of the whole group to demonstrate the process. One member acted as facilitator, while the remaining five were analysts or presenters. The audience assumed the role of reactors. The analysts first gave some background concerning their topic of discussion, the mandated completion of a research paper by all 11th graders in their school district. Following this, the analysts were asked to discuss amongst themselves how the first round of research papers and their assessment by the district had gone. After approximately 20 minutes of such discussion, the reactors were asked if they would like to pose any questions that might clarify their understanding of the topic. Several asked questions, and received replies. The reactors were then asked at 10:45 to discuss at their tables what warm, or supportive, and cool, or critical, feedback they had for the analysts. The analysts roamed the room, listening in as groups discussed their feedback. At 11:01, after most groups had generated lists of warm and cool feedback, the analysts were asked to reconvene and reflect on what they had heard. The team talked freely, sometimes laughing, and not appearing to have taken umbrage at any of the feedback they had received. Several comments indicated that team members might take action based on suggestions made by the reactors.

At 11:07, the facilitators asked participants to debrief their experience. One said the process felt comfortable, although she noted that she was more candid when participating now because she had been through the process before. 'You settle into it as you get to know it,' she added.

A participant asked the presenting team what the 'end of the story' was. The team facilitator responded, noting that, for instance, there was increased professionalism in the English department as a result of using the Protocol process" (Howley-Rowe, 1999b).

FINDINGS

Innovation Configuration Checklist Findings

Quest staff developed an Innovation Configuration Checklist (ICC) specifying the essential components of the project and variations thereof. The ICC was administered to Quest leadership team members at the February 2000 rallies for elementary and high school networks. With a Cronbach alpha of .78, the overall scale possessed sufficient reliability for this administration. Items 1-7 provide four variations for respondents to select among; item 8 provides 3 options. For purposes of analysis, items 1-7 were converted to a 4-point Likert-type scale, with 3 representing the most ideal variation of components and 0 representing the least satisfactory variation. Similarly, item 8 was converted to a 3-point Likert-type scale. An overall scale score of 23 points is possible.

Ten Xavier Quest team members completed the ICC. Descriptive statistics for this instrument are presented in Table 2. With a mean of 2.70 (SD .48), respondents tended to agree that their Quest leadership team was inclusive with administrator, teacher, parent, and student membership; had been fairly stable over time; and has assumed active leadership for taking the quest for continuous improvement back to their school. Team members agreed unanimously that one or more of their school's administrators were active members of the leadership team and extensively involved in project activities (3.00, SD .00).

Table 2
Innovation Configuration Checklist Descriptive Statistics

Item	N	Mean	SD
Quest school leadership team	10	2.70	0.48
Administrative support	10	3.00	0.00
Participation in network events	10	2.90	0.32
Participation in co-ventures in learning	10	2.90	0.32
Involvement with other Quest schools	10	2.20	1.03
School improvement/action research	10	2.60	0.84
Change in schoolwide view of school improvement	10	2.90	0.32
Engagement in related school improvement efforts	10	1.90	0.32
Scale total	10	21.10	2.60

Xavier team members tended to think that individuals from the school had participated in three or more network events during the past year (2.90, SD 032). They furthermore believed that

a wide cross-section of their school community had participated in Quest Co-ventures (2.90, SD 0.32). With a mean of 2.20 (SD 1.03), respondents tended to think that individuals from Xavier had visited another Quest school or that their school had hosted a visit by a sister school to their campus.

Xavier Quest team members reported that their school is implementing a school improvement project in connection with their involvement in Quest and is collecting data to demonstrate its impact on student learning (2.60, SD 0.84). With a mean of 2.90 (SD 0.32), most respondents reported that their school had been significantly impacted by the Quest approach, such that a wide cross-section is aware of the Quest framework and is committed to work on one or more of the component parts. Xavier has been actively engaged in other school improvement efforts, the results of which have been recognizable, according to respondents (1.90, SD 0.32).

The overall scale score of 21.20 (SD 2.60) suggests that Xavier has implemented the Quest approach to continuous school improvement with much fidelity. In addition to sending an inclusive leadership team to project events consistently, Xavier staff have undertaken a variety of change efforts and networking activities.

Reflective Assessment Findings

Nine Quest team members completed the Reflective Assessment questionnaire during the November 1999 high school rally. This instrument asks respondents to rate their school's convergence with a description of a school representing a "100" on a scale of 0-100 in increments of 10 with respect to each component from the Quest framework from continuous improvement. They are then requested to cite evidence or examples supporting their rating and describe the ways, if any, in which Quest made an impact on their school's development with regard to the component under consideration. Finally, respondents are asked what factors other than Quest have influenced their school's development.

Xavier means for the Reflective Assessment instrument ranged from a high of 86.25 to a low of 72.22, and standard deviations ranged from 9.16 to 15.63, indicating some variation in respondents' perceptions. With a Cronbach's alpha of $r = .93$ for this administration, the instrument possesses adequate internal reliability.

Staff appeared to believe that the Quest framework component upon which they had focused most was Shared Goals for Learning (86.25, SD 9.16). This item also had the smallest standard deviation, suggesting it garnered the least amount of variation among respondents. Asked on what they based their ratings, three of the nine Quest team members cited their triennial school plan. As one put it, the plan is "a 'living' document that is addressed monthly by principal, staff, advisory council, and school advisory council with input from student council." Another wrote, "Our goals for learning are clearly stated in our technical school plan. Each has specific strategies and identifies measurable outcomes." Other comments were unique. One respondent cited various sources of information, including DIAD data, curriculum mapping, and SOL scores. Another reported that the ways "students and staff try every day to improve something in our school." This respondent also

cited student and teacher surveys as providing data that might support the claim that the component of Shared Goals for Learning was the most closely approximated at Xavier. "Continuous work at programs like Quest," was evidence presented by another team member. One respondent described the way goals were disseminated throughout the staff.

Table 3
Reflective Assessment Mean Ratings

Quest Framework Component	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Strengthening the Learning Culture	9	60	90	74.44	11.30
Broadening the Learning Community	9	40	90	72.22	15.63
Sharing Leadership	9	70	90	81.11	9.28
Shared Goals for Learning	8	70	100	86.25	9.16
Assessing and Demonstrating Learning	9	50	100	75.56	16.67
Enabling SMART Learners[1]	9	60	90	73.89	10.54

Two respondents, on the other hand, offered replies indicating some reservation about the degree to which Xavier approximated the description of a school focusing on Shared Goals. One did not rate this item, but wrote, "I'm not sure what the goals for our school are and how we share those goals for learning." Although the remaining respondent rated this item 70, his or her comment that "I don't feel I have much say in what our funds go to," suggests misgivings about what is funded at the school.

Six of the nine respondents replied to the query about Quest's influence on the school's development with regard to sharing learning goals; the remaining three did not respond. Two team members noted that Quest had helped the school conduct DIAD. Two respondents simply reported that Quest had offered strategies for school improvement. More specifically, one Xavier staff member reported that Quest "helped us coordinate problem solving between parent/community, staff/advisory and student." The sixth respondent wrote, "Through our involvement in Quest we have been able to take a school plan which was once 70-80 pages and 67 elements to a more focused 10 page document of limited goals. This has provided greater focus on an improved learning environment."

Other major factors influencing the school's development with regard to shared goals were reported by six of the nine respondents. Two noted that county requirements played a role, while a

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[1]Developed by Quest staff, SMART is an acronym for Successful, Motivated, Autonomous, Responsible, and Thoughtful.

third mentioned state accountability mandates. One respondent cited the parent advisory council and the student council association, while another indicated that "constant teacher meetings [and] planning time" were factors. One reply could not be coded because its meaning was unclear.

Sharing Leadership for Learning received the second highest mean rating from Xavier Quest team members (81.11, SD 9.28) as well as the second smallest standard deviation. Seven of the nine respondents mentioned one or more school councils, organizations, or forums as evidence that the Xavier approximated closely the description of a school focused on shared leadership. Of these respondents, one also reported "see[ing] the administration standing back and guiding as opposed to taking charge." On the other hand, one added that, although the school administrators were open to input, they are "not perceived as being so by parents opposed to 4x4 [block scheduling] and teachers opposed to it. A definite hostile subculture exists."

One respondent cited shared responsibility among teachers for student learning as indication that shared leadership focused on learning is practiced at Xavier. A ninth respondent noted that although "there is access . . . sometimes ideas and feelings fall on deaf ears."

Six respondents replied affirmatively when asked whether involvement in Quest had influenced the school's development in terms of shared leadership; three did not respond. Four of the six respondents to this item indicated that Quest had been a source of ideas and strategies for enhancing this component. Two of these four also noted that Quest had provided the opportunity to gain insights from other schools in the network.

One team member replied that the school had "made greater efforts to involve community members (parent advisory, DIAD, focus group days in June)" as a result of Quest. Another mentioned that Xavier student involvement in Quest represented one way the project had influenced the school's development with regard to shared leadership.

Only four of the nine respondents replied to the item about other factors influencing the school's growth in shared leadership. All responses were idiosyncratic. One team member reported that strong leadership from the principal and key faculty members had been a factor, while another mentioned a variety of forums for constituent input. A third respondent described briefly a forum convened to discuss the student shooting incident at Columbine High School the previous year: "There was a good turnout, and many voices were heard." "Anger at 4x4 [block scheduling] has forced the administration to reach out more," was the analysis provided by another team member.

Broadening the Community of Learners was the Quest framework component receiving the lowest mean rating and having the largest standard deviation (72.22, SD 15.63). When asked upon what they had based their ratings, five respondents reported that although many teachers and students felt connected as a community of learners, others felt their contributions were considered unimportant or chose not to become actively involved. One such respondent attributed this difficulty to the school's large size.

One respondent reported a variety of means by which the community of learners was broadened, including DIAD and the school newsletter. Another cited a newly developed communication plan. Student involvement and respect for administration was reported by one team member as indication that the community of learners is broadening. "I still see students who want to criticize and not be a part of the solution. I also see an extremely active freshman class that seems to want more involvement," reported another respondent.

Six Xavier team members replied affirmatively to a query about whether and in what ways Quest had influenced the school's development with respect to a broadened learning community; three respondents did not reply. Four of the six responding to this item reported that Quest had served as a source of information, research, strategies, and assistance. Two others specifically mentioned DIAD as a means by which the school community had been extended.

A variety of responses was given in reply to the question about other factors influencing the school's development of a broadened learning community. Five Quest team members responded; four did not reply. One respondent cited the school's large population as a significant factor affecting the school's growth with respect to this framework component, while another noted state Standards of Learning as an important factor. Expansion of athletic programs and clubs has served to open the learning community, according to one respondent. Newsletters, e-mail, and the school website have been major factors, according to another. One team member reported that teachers "reach out" to students.

Professional Learning Community Findings

In 1998, Xavier staff completed the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* survey developed by Hord (1997; Meehan, Orletsky, & Sattes, 1997). This instrument consists of five main subsections: shared leadership, shared visions, collective creativity, peer review, and supportive conditions and capacities (Cowley, 1999), based upon research indicating that these attributes characterize professional learning communities (Hord, 1997). Subsections contain several individual items respondents are asked to rate using a 5-point Likert-type scale, with anchor points of low (1) and high (5). However, the field test of the survey revealed that it measures one overall construct rather than five distinct factors (Meehan, Orletsky, & Sattes, 1997). This construct could be described as the extent to which school staff perceive themselves as constituting a supportive professional learning community. Therefore, an overall score is calculated for the instrument; the higher the score, the more respondents feel their school is a positive learning community. The instrument contains 17 items, and the overall score may range from 17-85 points.

Quest schools were asked to readminister the instrument during the final year of the project. However, due to a change in administration at Xavier, this was not accomplished. Data are only available for the initial administration of the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* survey (see Table 4).

A total of 149 Xavier staff completed and returned the instrument. With a mean score of 54.56 (SD 13.94), Xavier staff appeared to believe that they were somewhat of a professional learning community in 1998.

Table 4
Results of the Professional Learning Community Instrument

Administration of Professional Learning Community Instrument	N	Mean	SD
Total Score	149	54.56	13.94

Student Achievement

Virginia students completed the new Standards of Learning (SOL) tests during the 1997-98 school year. Based upon the recently-established SOLs, these tests appear to have sufficient reliability and validity (Virginia Department of Education, 2000). As stated on the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Web site, "Virginia's education reform rests on a simple and common-sense concept: Set high, clear and measurable academic standards on a statewide basis, then measure student progress in meeting those standards through regular testing. Ensure accountability by tying school accreditation to student achievement." The end-of-course SOL tests are the assessment mechanism through which the VDOE appraises student achievement of the SOLs each year for each grade.

Because the SOL tests were first administered in 1998, and are not comparable with previously administered state-mandated tests, data are available for only two of the four years Xavier participated in Quest. In addition, 1999-2000 test results were not accessible at the time of this writing. Moreover, the only statistics attainable by the evaluator were the percent of students passing each SOL test. Analysis of student achievement in this report is therefore very limited.

The percent of Xavier students passing the English SOL tests dropped somewhat in 1999 (see Table 5). For instance, the percent passing the total English test dropped by 3.53 percentage points, from 75.38% in 1998 to 71.85% in 1999. Quite differently, Algebra scores rose dramatically. The percent of Xavier students passing the Algebra I test, for example, rose from 16.36% to 38.04%, a total of 21.68 percentage points. Likewise, history scores improved, increasing by between 11.59 and 12.64 percentage points. Gains in science scores were more modest. Although the percent passing the Earth Science test rose by 8.57 percentage points in 1999, the percent passing the Chemistry test dropped somewhat by 1.68 percentage points.

Table 5
Percent Passing SOL Tests, 1998-1999

SOL Test	1997-98	1998-99	Difference
English Reading/Literature	71.80	68.85	- 2.95
English Writing	79.25	74.88	- 4.37
English Total	75.38	71.85	- 3.53
Algebra I	16.36	38.04	+ 21.68
Geometry	53.13	49.19	- 3.94
Algebra II	12.90	48.66	+ 35.76
Math Total	27.88	45.05	+ 17.17
U.S. History	18.36	31.00	+ 12.64
World History from 1000 A.D.	28.53	40.12	+ 11.59
History Total	24.06	36.10	+ 12.04
Earth Science	42.96	51.53	+ 8.57
Biology	73.55	75.00	+ 1.45
Chemistry	69.73	68.05	- 1.68
Science Total	63.12	65.17	+ 2.05

School accreditation in Virginia will become dependent in 2007 on the percent of students passing the SOL tests (VDOE, 2000). In October 1998, the Virginia Board of Education determined that 70% of students in each accreditation-eligible school must pass each appropriate SOL test in order for that school to receive full accreditation. Schools not achieving the standard may be accredited provisionally or not at all; these schools will receive an academic review from the VDOE and will be required to submit an improvement plan.

Xavier students fell below the standard in 1999 for the English Reading and Literature test, although they achieved slightly above the standard in 1998. All math and science scores remained below the 70% standard in both 1998 and 1999. And although the percent passing the Biology SOL test closely approximated the standard both years, the remaining Science scores did not.

Overall, an apparently substantially higher percentage of Xavier students passed three of the four math SOL tests in 1999 than in 1998. The percent passing history and most of the science tests likewise increased in 1999. English, however, fared slightly less well in 1999 than in 1998. Although

participating in Quest may have had some impact on student achievement at Xavier, it is very difficult to determine the extent of such influence given the limitations of the data available.

Focus Group and Individual Interview Findings

Personal Impact

In seven of the nine individual interviews conducted, Xavier interviewees described the personal impact Quest made upon them. Ten comments concerned the learning that had taken place through the experience of participation in the project. Of these, two were generic. For example, one parent reported learning new ideas for school improvement: "[I learned of] some great ideas and the implementation of those ideas for, you know, to bring back here, and we were able to really do some good, I think."

Three comments about learning from Quest concerned gaining a view of the "big picture," as one respondent put it. A teacher said, "I think it has helped me to see how other schools go about school renewal. Sometimes we get locked in our own little shell. It's got me thinking about school renewal. How can I make our school better? Classroom teachers tend to get bogged down into the daily routine of the myriad of things we have to do, and sometimes it is difficult to stand back and look at the big picture. I think Quest has helped me personally to do that." Another reported, "It's really given me a lot of ideas to use personally in the classroom . . . new ways of thinking of things and new ways of looking at certain things and seeing that our problems are really universal more so than just specific to our school."

The administrator made three comments suggesting that she had learned of tools for implementing and managing change through Quest. As she said, "It's really given me some tools to look at school experience in school effectiveness . . . from a different perspective. The model has always been to look at the school from the outside and through data about students, through discipline, through attendance." She continued, "I think what Quest . . . has given us [is] an ability to look at school from the inside out." Using such tools, however, involved a certain amount of risk. She explained,

> "Uh, some of the things, some of the actions that I've taken as an administrator have come out of the techniques and the, using the tools that we, you know, learned about in Quest and in the school change collaborative and that has, that can have some political fall out for you personally in that you're pressing up against the status quo and, and in involving teachers in decision making or involving teachers in the valuation, then they begin to take ownership of the process and of the issues and want to move forward with change and that is often very difficult for those who are outside of the school to understand in that sometimes they see that as, you know, the natives are restless and not going along with you know what, not going along with, uh, the initiatives of the district when really what you're doing is, you've really gotten by it now and the teachers have ownership and they want real input and that can be, that can be dangerous for an administrator. So learning how to manage that in a positive

> way, I've had to question how I continue to use these tools in a way that has a positive impact on the school and on the teachers and also on my relationship with the people who are outside this school."

Two comments regarding learning from Quest concerned, both from students, acquiring leadership skills. As one said, "I think it shows you how to be a leader and to actually speak up for yourself, because I know when I was there [at a Quest rally] I was in charge of our whole school. Like, I was the speaker for our school, and it actually shows you how to get involved . . . and actually, like, talk to people that you're not used to talking to or giving speeches, and I thought that was awesome."

Seven comments indicated that they had made new relationships with members of their school community or with members of the Quest network. Said one teacher, "I really enjoy being with the kids and seeing somebody like Steven and Bella who've been there the whole time and watching them grow up. I mean, I think that was just wonderful." Another reported, "I think it has improved my relationship with other teachers and students here in school. I've got to know a lot of students that have gone onto the Quest team. This is such a large [school], 3000 students here, and some of these students I never knew until we went to Quest . . . Now I am involved in some of their programs. They come to me saying, 'Would you like to do this? Would you like to do that?' It has helped me branch out into the school." According to a student, meeting others from disparate schools had been a personal outcome from Quest participation: "It's been an opportunity to meet people from different, like, regions of the state, I guess. There's something different than . . . knowing about a school of 3000 and going and meeting kids that go to schools [that], like, are 1000 or so."

According to two interviewees, the experience of hearing student voice had made an impression on the personal and professional levels. "The big one was to listen to the student focus groups. We had a student focus group here at school with our parent advisory council. We had about 30 students and they were answering questions from the student surveys that the county cooked up. And I changed, after listening to that, and I was very pleased that I was able to listen . . . I changed about ten things the next day and they're all little things but they were . . . about how students feel comfortable in class, what teachers do to encourage students to learn, to pay attention."

Three comments suggested that Quest had been an affirming experience. One interviewee reported feeling energized to undertake school improvement following project gatherings. Another felt her approach to administration had been affirmed through Quest. As she put it,

> "I think sometimes there is this model of an, of the tough administrator and you know having to have a safe and secure environment, to have good discipline and order in this school, takes strength but I think it's more about building relationships and that always has been my, that was always my approach as a teacher and it was always effective but sometimes that can be seen as being too soft and I think if anything what the experience with Quest and with, with the school change collaborative has done for me is to say wait a minute you're on the right

> track and this is what it does take in order to have an effective school, is that building of relationships."

A third comment suggested that the respondent felt more hopeful about continuous improvement following Quest: "I think that by the end, uh, you saw . . . that there really were ways to deal with these problems which at the first rally almost seemed insurmountable . . . What really surprised me the most was that there was really actually a lot of things you can do and that schools can do to make learning happen."

The remaining six comments were idiosyncratic. One interviewee reported feeling a greater sense of engagement: "I think it has helped keep me involved in schools, in general . . . I think Quest has helped me stay focused and stay in tune to what the community needs in the way of product–a graduating student from our school." Another indicated that Quest had "given us a vocabulary in which to discuss some of the concerns that too often times . . . are characterized as moral issues when in reality they're learning issues." This Xavier participant also described having become "a lot more politically savvy in the use of these tools [learned through Quest]." However, she also noted that such growth was painful, saying, "One of the lessons is that change doesn't come without pain and that at some point, not only as an individual, but as a school community, you have to decide what price you're willing to pay to create the change and to maintain the change effort."

One interviewee appreciated learning about a resource developed by Quest staff focusing on the SMART concept. Another described the content of some of the rallies with more ambivalence, noting that Xavier Quest team members discussed the school's block schedule repetitively.

School Impact

General Impact of Quest at Xavier

Five of the nine individual interviewees noted some general influence Quest had made upon Xavier. Six comments suggested that Quest had facilitated discussion between staff, administrators, and students about school goals and priorities. "I think giving out surveys because I know that was a big thing," reported a respondent. Said one student, "At Quest we were talking about how we could improve, like, four by four and how we can improve our school spirit and we're giving out surveys now that say like, 'Xavier, what are the weaknesses of Xavier?' And then you write them down and, like, every single student in our school gets one, so they evaluate our school, like, on their independent, like, studies, how they see it, and I think that's, like, a big improvement." A teacher reported that as a result of such communication, school administrators took student and staff concerns more seriously: "I think the number one thing . . . is that I think that it's opened the administrations' eyes to the fact that some of the complaints that they were hearing were just not made [up], that they were really problems that actually needed to be dealt with. And I think that once they actually saw that, and I think that was a result of Data in a Day but to a large extent less so the first co-venture. And I think that's been very very positive because once they saw it was real, you

know, they started looking at ways to improve what were problems and they were seen as such by the administration."

In addition, four of the six comments about enhanced discussion between school community members also addressed the ways in which student voice had been incorporated. As one student phrased it, "I think it makes the other students know that we actually have somewhat of a say. Because they know that, they'll know when someone's missing from class and they'll go, 'Where were you?' and I was like, 'Oh, I went to class and we got to say this and this about this,' and they're like, 'Oh wow.' And then you know . . . it gets reported back to the student body so now more of them know and then we can see, because we'll say, 'Well, we hear what's been said, what needs to be changed,' and then we can actually see if it's been changed or not and I'd say it has helped for the most part, like we've seen some changes." Likewise, a teacher reported that student involvement in school matters had improved: "Student involvement was definitely improved, and I think that's a definite outbreak [sic] of Quest–you know, involvement in student government and having students involved in the Quest program has sort of helped spread it through the student body, even they don't exactly know what Quest is, they've some things, they've done an outgrowth with Quest."

Efforts to improve the school atmosphere and culture were reported in four comments. Said a student, "I think it's kind of more friendly." A parent involved in Quest described her efforts with the parent organization to install clearly marked signs around the school to provide students and visitors adequate information about the school's layout. She shared, "I know we tried to make the building itself [better] . . . one of the great ideas we came up with was the directional signs in the school. You know, this came out [of] our Quest conference . . . Looking at the building, just the environment, which was one of the first issues that we had discussed and where were we lacking after so many years and finding out how people went crazy over little signs that the PSO [Parent Student Organization] purchased and then [the principal] got on board and helped us do the financing. And so there was real cooperation between the administration, between, you know, teachers, everyone with, with great ideas."

This parent also reported that meeting with Xavier teachers during Quest events provided her a view of their experiences, which in turn led her to propose PSO activities intended to express appreciation for teachers. She describes the efforts in this way:

> "And that's, that's really from Quest we learned it just listening to the teachers, at least I did. You know, like, 'Well, you know, we [teachers] only get complaints.' And we thought, 'Well, let's see if we can change that, you know. Let's just try to do goofy things to say, you know' . . . The organization here, we charge $5.00–that's the whole year, for a family, and we try to, you know, like I say we did the projects with the signs, the directional signs and we try to give scholarship money every year and, so there's a lot of things that we, we try to do. But we try to find out, you know, what do they really want or how can we help in just a little way and just hearing from the teachers themselves . . . I know at the beginning of the year we give them a little deal with a first aid kit. It's got like an aspirin, a Tums, a rubber band so you can snap yourself a few times, you know they're junky little things in a little bag

and sometimes we put a little poem around with them. And it's funny when you find out [teachers say,] 'Well, I didn't [get] one, though. Do you have extra one? Well, I didn't get that book mark.' Crazy little things, and they act like little kids."

One comment was unique and could not be coded. A teacher suggested that Xavier had improved overall due to Quest, reporting, "I would like to say that I feel like the school . . . is a lot better, and I honestly believe that Quest is the factor in that."

Faculty focus group participants, however, presented a different account of the extent to which Quest had influenced the school. Ten comments made during the focus group interview suggested that Quest had saturated Xavier very little, if at all. Several of these included : "I don't see any impact or guidance at all and that's not to say that it isn't there but I don't know about it;" "I have to say there are probably results that I noticed that I don't know coming as a result of Quest and that's my ignorance but I just don't know it;" "You know, we see a little impact but that's it and I don't know any other and we don't have a person on the Quest team in the English department;" and, "The art department, I, you know, I'm not necessarily saying it's a negative thing but I think we have remained thus far on the outside of a lot of this stuff. But to be frank, I couldn't tell you what Quest is." These reports suggest that some faculty were unaware of Quest and Quest efforts, either because they had not been included in such activities or did not know others who had. One interviewee put it this way: "To be really candid, the problem is, and I think from this discussion today has become very obvious, this is a communication problem."

On the other hand, four comments made during the focus group indicated that other faculty were somewhat more aware of the project. Said one such respondent, "The people who have been involved are excited about it so it has been just another element of something to help here in the school." Another noted that the Protocol process had been used by English teachers to ready their students for a district mandated research paper, which students were required to pass to graduate. One teacher reported that students and another teacher in particular had found their participation in Quest useful, saying, "I think Terry Preston really takes what you do at Quest at heart and I think she does try to come back and she does try to work with [several school organizations] . . . But I think the students feel, uh, affirmed. They feel affirmation through Quest, and they feel that I think Terry gives them the, the feeling that they have power to change their school."

Impact of Data in a Day at Xavier

Twelve comments made during the interviews and the focus group concerned the Data in a Day process. Four Xavier interviewees reported that the technique had been inclusive of many perspectives and stakeholders, a challenging and risky undertaking in such a large school. As an administrator explained, "We do a lot with our school newsletter in terms of informing our community about our involvement with Quest and the fact that we're the only high school in northern Virginia that participates, so it's given, it's added, like, a little glitter to our school resume to be involved in this kind of a process with the department of education and parents are extremely impressed by that. Uh, they feel that, that the things that you're trying are not just the latest wave but

that they're grounded in research and they may not articulate that but it does lend a certain confidence in what this school, how this school's operating. And I think that was particularly true in Data in a Day because I tried very, I made a concerted effort not to just get our supporters involved. We had a lot of nay sayers involved in that Data in a Day process and I felt that was extremely important to open it up. And that's what I mean about you know bringing people in, when you bring people in, you risk that they may not agree with you and that's okay, you know."

Similarly, a teacher said, "I think DIAD was really the key to help us really start looking at what we are doing and how we are doing it and getting more than just administrators and the board of supervisors interested in the data because all the students were involved in it and the information was disseminated out to the students. And so it was a real turning point in getting kids involved in education, rather than just faculty and administration."

One other positive comment about DIAD was idiosyncratic. A teacher described a discussion with his students following the experience about their perceptions of the block schedule, which had been the subject of DIAD investigations. One student interviewee simply stated that the classes she had observed during DIAD had been boring.

However, five comments concerned the lack of follow up subsequent to the process. "I don't know if anything was ever followed up on what the Data in a Day results showed. I don't know, if it was you'd think we would have been kept informed of it," reported one respondent. Another interviewee indicated that planning tended to be the purview of an advisory council, and that their action based upon DIAD findings had not been communicated: "The advisory council is the group that really does a lot of the planning for the school, the school planning, and those folks meet once a month. And they take input from such things as class and the Data in a Day results, and they sort of formulate the school plan based on input like that. So I think that involves the advisory council, for a couple of years, in on those meetings but we haven't been impacted directly with the vocational classes. I'm sure that there have been some impacts on planning and that sort of thing but I just haven't been involved in those meetings." Two of the five comments suggesting a lack of DIAD outcomes also recommended that a report of findings from the process ought to have been distributed to school community members.

Impact of Protocol at Xavier

Six comments concerned the impact of the Protocol process at the school. According to an administrator, the Protocol process enabled teachers to communicate safely about instructional strategies to help them guide their students through successful completion of the newly mandated research paper for district juniors. She explained, "Our work with Protocol has given teachers a means to discuss school improvement, teacher instructional improvement, in a way that is nonthreatening to individual practice. It becomes more of a group effort and it is a team building experience for teachers. Uh, so often they work in isolation. They have no idea what each other are doing, and the Protocol opens that process up. And I've really seen it with our 11th grade team and now that's beginning to filter across the departments." Later, she added that the process was

introduced to Quest network members at just the time Xavier was confronting the challenge of helping juniors complete the research paper: "You know it was serendipity that at about the same time we were facing the challenges of the research paper and our teachers were so demoralized by having to meet that, that we were introduced to Protocol, which was a perfect process of letting teachers not only vent their frustrations in trying to meet this mandate but also . . . in having a tool that helped them to improve their performance and the performance of their students. And, you know, that kind of cost benefit or added plus to that was that it did build very strong relationships among those teachers who were involved in that process. And I think they have a great deal more professional respect for one another than they did prior to the use of it."

The remaining three comments about the Protocol process briefly described or praised the technique, or noted that it was currently used in several departments.

Value of the Quest Network

Xavier interviewees were asked to describe the value, if any, of the Quest network as a means of supporting continuous school improvement. Fourteen comments indicated various ways in which the network had been useful to participants. Of these, six cited the value of the network as a mechanism by which new ideas for school improvement had been shared. As one student put it, "I think you can see what they improved on, like actual activities that they do, like what clubs they have, what works for them, like, if something works for them like as small as they are, I think it could, like, work for us, so I think getting different activities and different ideas from the students that went to, the different schools." Similarly, a parent said, "I think it's been a wonderful opportunity. I think it's really opened a lot of avenues to people and just, as I say of seeing how other schools handled little problems and you go hey we've got it on a bigger picture or a smaller scale, whatever the size is, and just the free flow exchange of ideas has been wonderful. It's been great." A teacher on the Quest team reported likewise: "That's just another window, uh, on the problems and it's people coming together to talk about problems but not necessarily solutions. But, you know, just exploring, you know what other people are doing, hearing, listening and looking at the problems that they have. It makes your problems maybe, you know, at least it puts them into perspective, if nothing else."

Three interviewees described the value of diverse membership in the Quest network. As one teacher reported, " I saw a real value in it. I saw how schools without the funding that we have survive and do certainly as well as we are doing. I see schools with 150 students and see how successful they can be in a diversity of classes and such. The different things they can do, many courses offered to them and sports available to them even though they are a very small school. It is good to talk to them and see how they are addressing their local problems."

Another three suggested that, despite such diversity, the value of the network had been finding common ground amongst schools from various locales. Describing messages she had read on the project listserv, one interviewee said, for instance, "I know just reading some of the other questions and some of the other comments that we were all available to see, you know, you see, like,

they have a lot of your same concerns from little schools that have two and three hundred in West Virginia to our 3,000 plus school here, and yet you find the commonalities. And you know it gave you an outlet to kind of release some of your concerns and stresses and find out solutions, and I thought that was great."

The remaining two replies, from one respondent, were idiosyncratic. One comment suggested that participation in Quest had connected the school to a larger network of educators working toward continuous improvement. This interviewee said, "Well, I think in the network you have this sense that there is a national movement of people who are like-minded and that, that in the long run will come out in terms of the research that the labs are doing, and that it will have an impact on the way in which we practice, uh, school effectiveness or school techniques or whatever you want to call it. I mean I, I do think there is that sense of being part of something that is bigger than your school or your district or your community or even your state."

Moreover, this Quest member valued the relationship with the project researchers: "I found that the professional relationships with the researchers has been very good. I mean, I've enjoyed that because they come from a different point of view and it's fun to be able to bounce the ideas off and to interact and to, to sometimes be able to be their guide into the way that schools really do operate. Uh, and then to have them act as your guide into the areas of research that can help you to improve your school, that's a very exciting relationship."

Asked about networking with schools outside of Virginia, interviewees made six comments suggesting that it had been valuable. Mentioned in five instances was the value of discovering common educational ground across state boundaries. Said an administrator,"It doesn't matter whether you're in Tennessee, or whether you're in Kentucky, or whether you're in Virginia–you both have standards that you have to meet." Similarly, a teacher opined, "It doesn't make any differences there, outside or inside [Virginia], because when you're sharing, somebody's dealing with things or problems, it's just beneficial. And I think a lot of good ideas came to all the schools there from other schools, and it didn't matter whether they were in the same geographical type situation, you were the same size, or anything. But they are people who cared about–for the most part really cared about–bettering their schools and investigating, you know, exploring what other people were doing."

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions may be made based upon the findings reported earlier.

Based on the Innovation Configuration Checklist results, it can be concluded that Xavier has implemented Quest to a relatively high degree. A diverse Quest school team participated regularly in project activities, with active administrative support. The school hosted or visited other network schools and participated in a co-venture as well. Influenced to large extent by the Quest framework for continuous improvement, Xavier has implemented school improvement efforts and has participated in other related improvement activities, including involvement with the School Change Collaborative led by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

As a result of participation in Quest, Xavier focused on articulating shared goals for learning, particularly through the use of the DIAD process. DIAD enabled school staff to involve the wider school community in a structured method for data collection, analysis, and reporting around the issue of the block schedule.

Because post-test data for the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* survey are not available, no conclusions can be made about the degree to which Xavier staff became more of a learning community, if at all. However, school staff did appear to think they constituted a professional learning community to some extent in 1998.

Likewise, few conclusions may be drawn about student achievement at Xavier over the course of the school's participation in Quest. The percent of students passing the English SOL tests, the Geometry test, and the Chemistry test decreased somewhat between 1998 and 1999. Gains were made, however, on the remaining SOL tests, particularly on the math assessments. Nonetheless, the percent of Xavier students passing most tests was below the VDOE standard of 70%. It can be concluded that Xavier students achieved to a somewhat greater extent in 1999 than in 1998 on most SOL tests, although they continued to fall short of most of the standards set by the VDOE.

Based on the interview and focus group data, it can be concluded that Quest had important personal and professional implications for those directly involved in the network. Xavier Quest participants learned of school improvement techniques from their fellow network members, made significant professional relationships with colleagues both within Quest and inside Xavier, gained insight into the student perspective, and were affirmed in their reform efforts. Participation in Quest also connected Xavier staff to other network members, who were valued both for their diversity and their perspectives on shared problems.

Quest facilitated the use of DIAD at Xavier, a process which involved a diversity of stakeholders in examining the value of the school's block schedule. Although respondents found the technique to have been useful, some did not think the process had been followed up adequately. Quest staff also introduced Xavier to the Protocol process, which the English department at the school adopted to assist their efforts to help juniors successfully complete a newly mandated research

paper. Interviewees spoke positively about the experience but did not offer any evidence about its effectiveness.

Beyond those who had been directly involved in Quest, or who had participated in DIAD or Protocol, Quest saturated the school very little. Faculty who had not participated in the project were unable to report initiatives or outcomes associated with Quest, although several knew of the two processes implemented at Xavier. Some suggested that this may have been an artifact of the school's size.

Overall, Quest was a useful experience for those who were most closely associated with it. Of most importance to such participants was the knowledge they gained and relationships nurtured as a result of involvement in the network. DIAD and Protocol were implemented at the school with some success, although results from both were unclear at the time of data collection. The inclusion of student voice was an important aspect of school improvement discovered by some Xavier staff members, while others listened to teachers at rallies and made efforts upon their return to improve the school environment. Quest team members reported that they had participated in the project to a high degree, but other data suggest that the Quest approach did not permeate the school. This is not surprising, however, given the school's size and the number of other initiatives and concerns requiring attention in such a large school.

It is possible that the Protocol process will continue to be used at the school in various departments and that results from DIAD will continue to inform decisions about Xavier's block schedule. However, the two administrators who had participated in the network are no longer at the school, a circumstance which may inhibit the persistence of such efforts.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A:

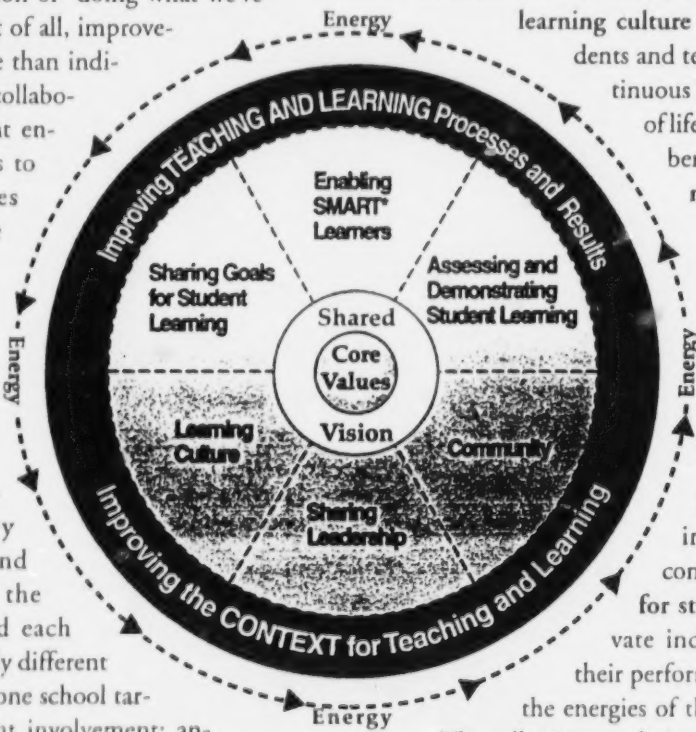
Quest Brochure and Framework for Continuous Improvement

Quest for Quality Learning Communities
A Program for Continuous School Improvement

School improvement is challenging work; to be effective, it must be continuous. Improvement is not a single act or program; it is a process of always wanting to learn more about how better to help all students achieve at higher levels. Improvement is visionary; it involves risk-taking, uncertainty, and a rejection of "doing what we've always done." Most of all, improvement requires more than individual effort: it is a collaborative endeavor that engages and responds to the diverse voices within an entire community.

Teams from 20 schools in a four-state region now collaborate with staff from the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) to study and learn together in the Quest project, and each school takes a slightly different path. For example, one school targets increased parent involvement; another hopes to raise the level of student thinking through teachers' working together and coaching one another; a high school improves teaching by listening to what students say about how they learn best; other schools focus on specific curriculum areas such as writing or science education.

The Quest framework unifies their thinking about school improvement. These **core values** offer a blueprint for continuous progress: ongoing questioning of practice, high expectations for all, individual responsibility for better performance, collegial sharing and support, and thoughtful reflection on practice.



Stemming from these values is a clearly defined **vision** of student excellence that is shared by all members of the school community. A strong **learning culture** encourages both students and teachers to choose continuous improvement as a way of life in their school. Members of the **school community** connect to one another through a shared commitment to improved learning conditions for all. **Shared leadership** encourages and enables everyone to assume responsibility for making a positive impact on the school community. **Shared goals for student learning** motivate individuals to improve their performance and help focus the energies of the entire community.

The collection, analysis, and **use of student assessment data** sustains continuous improvement, providing a measure of the effectiveness of the community's efforts. SMART learners are Successful, Motivated, Autonomous, Responsible, and Thoughtful. Fully equipped to become lifelong learners, they are ready for life and work in the 21st century. In short, continuous improvement spawns the **energy** and excitement necessary to transform a collection of individuals into a true learning community.

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Goals of the Quest Project

1. *Connect* **with colleagues.** By serving on a Quest leadership team, participants connect with others on their school team, forming bonds that enhance working relationships. In addition, Quest teams connect with teams from other schools, districts, and states, allowing everyone to learn from others' experiences. A listserv, inquiry@ael.org, facilitates connections across the network.

2. *Create* **a learning community.** Teams become part of the Quest network learning community with the expectation of recreating this experience in their own community.

3. *Connect* **with concepts and stories related to continuous school improvement.** At Quest rallies, the Quest framework is a source of study, dialogue, and sharing among teams.

4. *Create* **personal and shared meaning.** The Quest network places a high value on processes such as reflection and dialogue, which lead to deeper understandings of continuous improvement.

5. *Commit* **to continue learning with this community.** Quest schools have made a three-year commitment to study and learn together, with a focus on improving student achievement.

What is a learning community? "Learning communities are essentially communities of inquirers . . . sustained by a continued commitment to share this journey of exploration with one another on matters people care deeply about" (Ryan, 1995).

Peter Senge et al. (1994) write that a learning organization "is a place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, . . . and where people are continually learning how to learn together."

6. *Commit* **to continue the Quest back home.** The "rubber hits the road" at schools, not at Quest events. AEL helps school teams take their learnings home and apply them for the benefit of students. Site visits, called Co-Ventures in Learning, provide opportunities for AEL staff to visit each school, in order to better understand the context of that school's efforts, and tailor assistance to the school's needs.

The Quest project hopes to achieve results at three different levels:

- For individuals, sharing leadership on a Quest team leads to more reflective practice and renewed understanding of the concepts that support continuous improvement.
- For schools, Quest will provide motivation and support for ongoing and/or new school-based initiatives to improve teaching and learning.
- For the Quest network of schools, our collaborative learning and research will yield stories, insights, processes, and products—all of which will be helpful to the broader educational community.

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APPENDIX B:

Quest Team Member Individual Interview Protocol

Quest Co-Venture 2 Interview Protocol

Instructions: We are interested in your perceptions regarding the difference Quest has made for you personally and for your school. Please respond to the focusing questions honestly and openly. There are no right answers, and we are sincerely interested in your personal assessment and reaction. Also, please be assured that your name will not be associated with any of your comments. We are committed to protecting your confidentiality and anonymity.

1. Personal/Professional: What impact has your involvement with Quest had upon your **personal and professional growth** and development?

If the respondent does not talk about the following areas of impact, the interviewer should probe for more information using the prompts below.

(a) In what areas have you increased your **knowledge and skills** as a result of Quest participation?

(b) What **attitudes or beliefs** have been challenged and/or modified through involvement with Quest?

(c) What **questions** have you been prompted to investigate?

(d) What **personal behaviors** have you changed or attempted to modify as a result of your involvement in Quest?

(e) What meaningful **relationships** have you developed?

2. School reform/improvement: In what ways has participation in Quest contributed to your **school's journey of continuous improvement**?

(a) Please describe specifically the **results** or outcomes for students and adults that you believe attributable to Quest.

(b) Think about the Quest **framework** and its six constructs. In which of these areas has your school become more focused?

Culture for Learning
Sharing Leadership
Community of Learners
SMART Learners
Assessing and Demonstrating Learning
Sharing Goals for Learning

(c) What is different now as a result of your school's focus on this component?

3. Value of Network: To what extent and in what ways has the Quest **network** supported the individual learning and school improvement you described above?

Additional prompts for further information below.

(a) What is the value of networking with others schools as we have done in Quest?

(b) Describe the value of relating to schools outside of your own state.

APPENDIX C:

Faculty Group Interview Protocol

Quest Co-Venture 2
Faculty Focus Group Protocol

Thank you very much for participating today in this focus group interview. We're interested in learning more about what school improvement efforts you've undertaken here since your school's involvement in the Quest network.

Let me describe a few guidelines before we begin. First, we will be recording today's conversation. However, let me assure you that your name will not be associated with any comment you make. We will have the tape transcribed, but you will never be identified personally. This is to protect your confidentiality and anonymity. Second, the purpose of a focus group is to get everyone's candid viewpoint. No one's answers are right or wrong, so please respect everyone's opinion. And, finally, it is important that everyone has an opportunity to express their opinions concerning each question. It is my job to ensure that everyone has that opportunity. With these guidelines in mind, let's begin!

1. For those of you **not** directly involved in Quest, what is your understanding of the project?

2. What school improvement efforts have you undertaken here as a result of your school's participation in Quest?

3. How successful have these been? For what reasons?

4. What student results or outcomes have you seen as a result of the improvement projects you've undertaken? (Do you have data or stories supporting this that you might share with us?)

5. What other results or outcomes have you seen as a result of these projects? (Do you have data or stories supporting this that you might share with us?)

6. What is your favorite story about the projects you've participated in?

APPENDIX D:

Reflective Assessment Questionnaire

Reflective Assessment for Quest Schools of Continuous Improvement

Name: _____ School: _____

Directions: This instrument was designed to help you reflect upon your school's development as a school of continuous improvement. For each of the six dimensions of the Quest framework, circle the number that best represents your school's current position on the continuum. Then explain your rating and describe how change has occurred. **Please be honest. We appreciate frank and open responses.**

Also, please be assured that your name will not be associated with any of your comments. We are committed to protecting your confidentiality and anonymity.

Culture for Learning

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "culture for learning." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Members of the school staff frequently reflect on how to improve the school for all students. They not only ask lots of questions–including "How can we do this better?"–but also they regularly try new ideas, with administrative support, and celebrate their successes as a community. Likewise, students are curious and show excitement for learning.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest made an impact? Give specific examples.

▼

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

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Community of Learners

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "community of learners." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Members of the school community, especially students and teachers, feel connected to one another and to the school as an organization with a clear mission. Open and regular communication promote norms of trust and respect. The school is a center of learning for the entire community; parents and other community members are welcomed and valued.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest made an impact? Give specific examples.

▼

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

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Sharing Leadership for Learning

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "sharing leadership for learning." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Teachers, parents, and students have a forum for input into decisions and have easy access to important information about the school. They know that they are listened to and that what they think and do makes a difference. School administrator(s) participate democratically with teachers. School leadership teams include students–or at least are guided by students' perspectives–as they plan for school improvement.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest made an impact? Give specific examples.

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

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Shared Goals for Learning

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "shared goals for learning." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Goals for school improvement are specific, measurable, and identifiable by all segments of the school community. These goals are a major consideration in decision making about allocation of school resources. They affect decisions at both the classroom and school levels.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest hade an impact? Give specific examples.

▼

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

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Assessing and Demonstrating Learning

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "assessing and demonstrating learning." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

At the school level, multiple data sources are carefully studied and used in setting goals. Results of student achievement tests are disaggregated and are widely communicated and interpreted to the broader community. At the classroom level, teachers communicate clear expectations for student performance and use a variety of methods to assess progress. Students and teachers actively assess their own performance and time is provided for this reflection.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest hade an impact? Give specific examples.

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

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Enabling SMART Learners

➤ The paragraph below describes a school at "100" in the area of "enabling SMART learners." Where does your school fit on the continuum?

Throughout the school, students and teachers are actively engaged in meaningful work which they understand is connected with the real world and with their future. Students are aware of their own personal strengths in learning, they increasingly are intrinsically motivated to learn, and accept responsiblity for their own performance. Students and teachers are aware that learning discrete facts is not nearly as important as is developing skills necessary for lifelong learning in the complex world of the 21st century.

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

➤ On what do you base your rating? Cite specific evidence/examples to support the above rating.

➤ Has involvement in Quest for Quality Learning Communities influenced your school's development in this area?

□ No □ Yes

If yes, in what ways has Quest hade an impact? Give specific examples.

If yes or no, what *besides involvement in Quest* have been the major factors influencing your school's development in this area?

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APPENDIX E:

Professional Learning Community Instrument

School Professional Staff as Learning Community*

Directions: This questionnaire concerns your perceptions about your school as a learning organization. There are no right or wrong responses. Please consider where you believe your school is in its development of each of the five numbered descriptors shown in bold-faced type on the left. Each sub-item has a five-point scale. On each scale, circle the number that best represents the degree to which you feel your school has developed.

Last Four Social Security Numbers: __ __ __ __

Date: _____

School: _____

1. School administrators participate democratically with teachers sharing power, authority, and decision making.

1a

5	4	3	2	1
Although there are some legal and fiscal decisions required of the principal, school administrators consistently involve the staff in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.		Administrators invite advice and counsel from the staff and then make decisions themselves.		Administrators never share information with the staff nor provide opportunities to be involved in decision making.

1b

5	4	3	2	1
Administrators involve the entire staff.		Administrators involve a small committee, council, or team of staff.		Administrators do not involve any staff.

2. Shared visions for school improvement have an undeviating focus on student learning and are consistently referenced for the staff's work.

2a

5	4	3	2	1
Visions for improvement are discussed by the entire staff such that consensus and a shared vision results.		Visions for improvement are not thoroughly explored; some staff agree and others do not.		Visions for improvement held by the staff are widely divergent.

2b

5	4	3	2	1
Visions for improvement are always focused on students and teaching and learning.		Visions for improvement are sometimes focused on students and teaching and learning.		Visions for improvement do not target students and teaching and learning.

2c

5	4	3	2	1
Visions for improvement target high quality learning experiences for all students.		Visions for improvement address quality learning experiences in terms of students' abilities.		Visions for improvement do not include concerns about the quality of learning experiences.

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3. Staff's collective learning and application of the learnings (taking action) create high intellectual learning tasks and solutions to address student needs.

3a

5	4	3	2	1
The entire staff meets to discuss issues, share information, and learn with and from each other.		Subgroups of the staff meet to discuss issues, share information, and learn with and from each other.		Individuals discuss issues, share information, and learn with and from each other.

3b

5	4	3	2	1
The staff meets regularly and frequently on substantive student-centered educational issues.		The staff meets occasionally on substantive student-centered educational issues.		The staff never meets to consider substantive educational issues.

3c

5	4	3	2	1
The staff discusses the quality of their teaching and students' learning.		The staff does not often discuss their instructional practices nor its influence on student learning.		The staff basically discusses non-teaching and non-learning issues.

3d

5	4	3	2	1
The staff, based on their learnings, makes and implements plans that address students' needs, more effective teaching, and more successful student learning.		The staff occasionally acts on their learnings and makes and implements plans to improve teaching and learning.		The staff does not act on their learning.

3e

5	4	3	2	1
The staff debriefs and assesses the impact of their actions and makes revisions.		The staff infrequently assesses their actions and seldom makes revisions based on the results.		The staff does not assess their work.

---

4. Peers review and give feedback based on observing each other's classroom behaviors in order to increase individual and organizational capacity.

4a

5	4	3	2	1
Staff regularly and frequently visit and observe each other's classroom teaching.		Staff occasionally visit and observe each other's teaching.		Staff never visit their peers' classrooms.

4b

5	4	3	2	1
Staff provide feedback to each other about teaching and learning based on their classroom observations.		Staff discuss non-teaching issues after classroom observations.		Staff do not interact after classroom observations.

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5. Conditions and capacities support the school's arrangement as a professional learning organization.

5a

5	4	3	2	1
Time is arranged and committed for whole staff interactions.		Time is arranged but frequently the staff fails to meet.		Staff cannot arrange time for interacting.

5b

5	4	3	2	1
The size, structure, and arrangements of the school facilitate staff proximity and interaction.		While the facility and school membership are large, the staff are working to maximize existing arrangements for interaction.		The staff takes no action to manage the facility and personnel for interaction.

5c

5	4	3	2	1
A variety of processes and procedures are used to encourage staff communication.		A single communication exists and is sometimes used to share information.		Communication devices are not given attention.

5d

5	4	3	2	1
Trust and openness characterize all the staff.		Some of the staff are trusting and open.		Trust and openness do not exist among the staff.

5e

5	4	3	2	1
Caring, collaborative, and productive relationships exist among all the staff.		Caring and collaboration are inconsistently demonstrated among the staff.		Staff are isolated and work alone at their task.

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*Hord, Shirley M. (1996). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

APPENDIX F:

Quest Innovation Configuration Checklist

School Name _____ Your Role/Position _____

Date _____

Quest Schools of Continuous Improvement
Innovation Configuration Checklist

Directions: The eight items in this instrument represent the components associated with the Quest Network of Schools of Continuous Improvement. Beneath each component are alternative ways in which the components might be implemented in a school. For each item, circle the letter which best describes *your* perception of how Quest has been implemented in your school.

1. **School Leadership Team**

   a. All three of the following are true of our school leadership team: (1) It is inclusive with administrator, teacher, parent, and (in the case of high schools) student membership; (2) It has been fairly stable over time; and (3) It has assumed active leadership in taking our quest back home to the broader school community.

   b. Two of the following are true of our school leadership team: (1) It is inclusive with administrator, teacher, parent, and (in the case of high schools) student membership; (2) It has been fairly stable over time; and (3) It has assumed active leadership in taking our quest back home to the broader school community.

   c. One of the following statements is true of our school leadership team: (1) It is inclusive with administrator, teacher, parent, and (in the case of high schools) student membership; (2) It has been fairly stable over time; and (3) It has assumed active leadership in taking our quest back home to the broader school community.

   d. Our school does not have a true leadership team.

2. **Administrative Support**

   a. One or more of our school's administrators are active members of the leadership team and extensively involved in Quest activities.

   b One or more of our school's administrators are members of the leadership team and have been occasionally involved in Quest activities.

   c One or more of our school's administrators have been involved in a few Quest activities and have been generally supportive of our team.

   d Our school administrators have not been involved in Quest activities and are only minimally supportive of our school's involvement in Quest.

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3. **Participation in Network Events**

   a. Individuals from our school have participated in three (3) or more Network events during the past year including Rallies, Summer Symposia, and/or Scholar's Colloquia.

   b. Individuals from our school have participated in two (2) Network events during the past twelve months including Rallies, Summer Symposia, and/or Scholar's Colloquia.

   c. Individuals from our school have participated in one (1) Network event during the past twelve months including Rallies, Summer Symposia, and/or Scholar's Colloquia.

   d. Individuals from our school have not participated in any Network events during the past year.

4. **Participation in Co-Ventures in Learning**

   a. A wide cross-section (i.e., administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students) of our school community participated in the Quest Co-Venture(s) in Learning.

   b. A limited number of our school community—primarily administrators, teachers and staff—participated in our Quest Co-Venture(s).

   c. Our school has not yet engaged in a Quest Co-Venture in Learning, but plans to do so during this school year.

   d. Our school has no plans to participate in a Quest Co-Venture.

5. **Involvement with Other Quest Schools**

   a. Our school has been directly involved in sharing successful practices with other Quest schools by either (1) adopting a practice that we learned about from a sister school, (and)/or (2) helping a sister school adopt a practice that has been effectively used at our school.

   b. Individuals from our school have visited another Quest school or our school has hosted a visit by another Quest school to our campus.

   c. Leadership team members have shared ideas with individuals from other schools at rallies and other network events.

   d. Our school has had very limited involved with other Quest schools.

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6. **School Improvement/Action Research**

   a. Our school is implementing a school improvement project in connection with our involvement in Quest and is collecting data to demonstrate its impact on student learning.

   b. Our school is implementing a school improvement project in connection with our involvement in Quest, but has not designed a formal plan for assessing its effectiveness.

   c. Our school is currently considering one or more school improvement initiatives that would be supported by our involvement with Quest.

   d. Our school has no plans to pursue an improvement initiative as a part of our involvement in the Quest network.

7. **Change in School-Wide View of School Improvement**

   a. Our school community has been significantly impacted by the Quest approach. A wide cross-section is aware of the Quest framework and committed to work on one or more of the component parts.

   b. Our faculty and staff have focused on one or more aspect of the Quest approach to continuous improvement.

   c. Members of the Quest leadership team have been affected by the Quest approach to continuous improvement.

   d. Our school community has not been influenced by the Quest approach to continuous improvement.

8. **Engagement in Related School Improvement Efforts**

   a. Our school has been actively engaged in other school improvement efforts and the results have been recognizable.

   b. Our school has been involved in other school improvement efforts but there are no clearly identifiable results from our participation.

   c. Our school has not been involved in any other school improvement efforts.

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APPENDIX G:

Completed Evaluation *Standards* Checklist

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Checklist for Applying the Standards

To interpret the information provided on this form, the reader needs to refer to the full text of the standards as they appear in Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, *The Program Evaluation Standards* (1994), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

The Standards were consulted and used as indicated in the table below (check as appropriate):

Descriptor		The Standard was addressed	The Standard was partially addressed	The Standard was not addressed	The Standard was not applicable
U1	Stakeholder Identification	x			
U2	Evaluator Credibility	x			
U3	Information Scope and Selection	x			
U4	Values Identification	x			
U5	Report Clarity	x			
U6	Report Timeliness and Dissemination	x			
U7	Evaluation Impact	x			
F1	Practical Procedures	x			
F2	Political Viability	x			
F3	Cost Effectiveness	x			
P1	Service Orientation	x			
P2	Formal Agreements	x			
P3	Rights of Human Subjects	x			
P4	Human Interactions	x			
P5	Complete and Fair Assessment	x			
P6	Disclosure of Findings	x			
P7	Conflict of Interest	x			
P8	Fiscal Responsibility	x			
A1	Program Documentation	x			
A2	Context Analysis	x			
A3	Described Purposes and Procedures	x			
A4	Defensible Information Sources	x			
A5	Valid Information	x			
A6	Reliable Information	x			
A7	Systematic Information	x			
A8	Analysis of Quantitative Information	x			
A9	Analysis of Qualitative Information	x			
A10	Justified Conclusions	x			
A11	Impartial Reporting	x			
A12	Metaevaluation	x			

The Program Evaluation Standards (1994, Sage) guided the development of this (check one):

____ request for evaluation plan/design/proposal
____ evaluation plan/design/proposal
____ evaluation contract
_x_ evaluation report
____ other: _____

Name Caitlin Howley-Rowe Date 11/01/00

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Relation to Document Author
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